

[W. S. McLure]

SOUTH CAROLINA WRITERS' PROJECT

Life History

TITLE: How Mr. W. S. McLure came to be in the real estate business.

Date of First Writing February 16, 1939

Name of Person Interviewed W. S. McLure (White)

Street Address West Main Street

Place Union, S. C.

Occupation Real Estate Man

Name of Writer Caldwell Sims Union, S. C.

Name of Reviser E. F. Kennedy

W. S. McLure lives in a beautiful home on South Street, which he owns. It has an attractive yard and the house is well kept and commodious in its appointments. He has an easy, smooth-running car. His other property, which is dotted all over Union, is also well kept and his rental houses are attractive to the eye of the beholder. In his developing and buying of land in the city limits he has always tried to improve and beautify the landscape and also to see that his renters kept up their promises.

Mr. McLure has developed North Church Street by building a group of four-room houses on it. The lawns are planted and kept attractive all the year round. He always protects the trees that nature has planted on his property all over the town, often adding shrubs

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or more trees where shade and beauty are needed. He has his houses well lighted, and adequate plumbing installed in them.

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On historic "Tosch" Branch is a well kept valley, known as McLure Bottoms. The native growth on the branch through the McLure property has been protected and remains undisturbed. Where the branch is traversed by fashionable South Street a portion of it is a beauty spot the entire year round. The bottoms are planted in a forage crop mixed with vetch and lespedeza, thus furnishing a picture of charm and prosperity to the eye throughout all seasons.

Mr. McLure's own account of his career is as follows: "My father, J. W. McLure, came to Unionville from Chester, S. C., when he was only eighteen years old. His uncle, John McLure, ran a mercantile business on Main Street at the site now occupied by Wright-Baker. He took Father in with him and this was Father's first business enterprise. I grew up here.

"When I was a small boy there were only four buildings on Main Street, that are still standing now. They are the Hob Nob Restaurant, Wright-Baker's, the Flynn Home, and further down the street the building which now houses the Arthur Stores.

"As a youth, I felt within me a desire to be something and had an idea of owning a home and real estate, some future day. I wanted to be what people would call a good citizen, a builder and one whom my associates would look on with admiration.

"My first work was with my father in his general merchandise store known as the firm of Rice and McLure. It was an old frame building which stood on Main Street at the site of our present marble yard. I stopped school and began to work here when I was between fourteen and fifteen years old. Father paid me \$100 a year, and I saved some money from this salary. Of course I lived at home with him and paid nothing for room and board.

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I had ambition to save some, and I have had a desire to have something ever since. I enjoyed this work and received valuable business training under Father.

I desired more education. So, after a year in the store, Father sent me to Charleston to the Holy Communion Church Institute, now Porter Military Academy. I studied there during, 1882 and 1883. Some of my classmates have become distinguished. They are General Charles P. Summerall, of the Citadel, Charleston; Philip E. Gadsden of Philadelphia, and others who are well known in this country today. At the end of the year I left Charleston and returned to Union, again working for Rice and McLure. I stayed with the firm until they went out of business in [1889?].

"Father then went into business as J.W. McLure, Agent for W. H. Roseborough of Chester, S. C. He ran a general mercantile business where the Rialto Theatre now is. He remained there until 1891. I continued working for my father and made \$50 a month, which is the most I ever made as a salesman. By this time I had a wife and two children. All of my earnings went for the upkeep of my family. My wife became ill and lived only three years. I had heavy doctor's bills and other expenses, which I did not get cleared up for several years afterwards.

"My brother, J. Fred McLure, studied law in Chester under his cousin, Joe McLure, and was admitted to the bar in Columbia. When he returned from Chester, he and I bought Father's business from the creditors and we ran it together until 1920. We used my meagre savings to buy our 4 small stock of goods. My brother gradually paid me back what he owed me and we were on a fifty-fifty proposition. We made some money each year and increased our stock of goods at the beginning of each year.

"All this time we were making money on our side lines. I began my first dabbles in real estate. I sold coal; bought cotton seed meal and hulls on the side. And brother did some law practice on the side. During this time we bought and paid for the building in which

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we were doing business. We also built another building, which is known as the Hob Nob Restaurant. Before that we had built the store back of the Hob Nob.

“However, 1920 found our mercantile firm a failure; so we went into bankruptcy. Brother Fred bought the stock and re-Opened an J. F. McLure. When we were together, we were known as J.F. and W. S. McLure. Now Fred had complete ownership of the store, and I gave my time to the real estate business. I had been active in the real estate business since 1914, and I organized “The McLure Realty Company”, a corporation of which I am now the president and treasurer. Since that time I have gone on in the even tenor of my ways, slowly building houses, principally on a cash basis, very little credit at any time. I have found in my experience that the four-room house is the most practical house to rent in Union. I own a good many in a nice section of town that I rent by the month.

“During the period that my brother and I were in the mercantile business, and I in the realty business, I was a director in the Citizens Bank, from the time of its organization. For eighteen years I was a member of the Commission of the Light and Water Plant of Union. During this period much building and development has gone on in Union, and property has increased in value.”